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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ISLAMABAD 015513

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/11/2015

TAGS: PREL PK MASS PARM AEMR ASEC PGOV AADP CASC AID

SUBJECT: PAKISTAN EARTHQUAKE: RELIEF MOVING FORWARD

REF: A. HUNT/SWAMY/GRENCIK - TASK FORCE EMAIL 10/13/2005

1B. GRENCIK - FAGIN EMAIL 10/14/05

1C. ISLAMABAD 15316 AND PREVIOUS NOTAL

Classified By: DCM Patricia Butenis, Reasons 1.5 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary and introduction: Relief efforts in Pakistan are pushing forward, as the government begins to implement a coherent Concept of Operations for managing its response to the crisis. The U.S. has received diplomatic clearance to double its milair relief flights into Islamabad, and additional U.S. helicopters arrive each day to join the mission. Even with the ramp up in relief operations, many areas hit by the October 8 earthquake remain inaccessible to relief workers. U.S. C-130s began air-drops of rations to survivors in these remote areas. Military coordinators are now considering whether some U.S. air assets should redeploy to alternative air fields, as operations at the Qasim and Chaklala sites are reaching saturation. The UN and NGO relief continues to move forward, but coordination with the government remains a challenge. The press continues to berate the government for an inadequate response to the crisis, with some actually suggesting that the failure to reach victims in remote areas as "politically-motivated neglect." (Note: In a meeting in which the Ambassador urged the government to proactively engage the media, he repeated this baseless characterization to National Security Advisor Tariq Aziz. After a moment of stunned silence, Aziz replied, with perfect comedic timing, "That's nonsense -- the region voted PML" (i.e., for President Musharraf's party). End note.)

No AMCIT Casualties

¶2. (SBU) The Embassy has not had any reports of American citizens killed or injured. Consular officers have cleared eleven (11) welfare-and-whereabouts inquiries as of October 13; they are following up on two additional inquiries received October 14.

U.S. Relief Flights and Helicopter Operations

¶3. (C) The Office of Defense Representative - Pakistan (ODRP) scored a major victory today, obtaining blanket diplomatic clearance for eight (8) U.S. milair flights daily, doubling the number the USG had earlier in the week. Five flights came in on October 13, carrying tents, cots, rations, maintenance parts. The Contingency Response Group (CRG) at Chaklala airfield is doing well and is lashed up with the Pakistan Air Force. The CRG was able to dramatically improve the efficiency of the airfield's cargo operations by connecting two NGO workers who have worked for DHL to Pakistani logistics officers: the NGO/DHL workers showed the Pakistanis the advantages of getting cargo onto pallets and quickly converted a haphazard operation into an organized, efficient warehouse. In another stroke of serendipity, CRG cargo handlers came to the rescue when an IL-76 bearing Iranian relief supplies could not find a Pakistani team to off-load its cargo; a photo of the U.S. ground crew unloading the Iranian supplies made the morning papers.

¶4. (C) Task Force Griffen conducted seventy-six helicopter sorties, conveying 208,680 pounds of relief supplies and 675 injured passengers. Two Navy CH-53s arrived at Qasim AFB on October 13. Twenty CH-47s are still on schedule to arrive in staggered flows in Baghram over the next fourteen (14) days. On the State side, two (2) INL-sponsored MI-8s from Kabul due in Pakistan on October 14 have been delayed at least one day, as the Bulgarian and Tajikistani firms from whom the helos are leased must seek national government approval to transfer the assets to Pakistan.

Pieces Falling Together: GOP Concept of Operations

¶5. (SBU) In post's morning meeting with Deputy Commissioner of the Federal Relief Commission (FRC) BG Farooq, USG liaisons received a presentation outlining the GOP's Concept of Operations for the relief effort. (Note: Post has emailed the full presentation to Task Force-1. End note.) The liaison team will reciprocate on October 14 by giving the

FRC an outline of how the U.S. military can support the GOP Concept of Operations. Once approved by the GOP, the U.S. military response will be knitted together with the Pakistani concept. Post liaisons will then weave support from U.S. civilian agencies (DART, USAID, etc.), the UN and NGOs into the fold.

16. (C) The GOP has identified three sites (Rawalkot, Muzzaferabad and Mansehra) as potential forward operating bases, from which relief supplies would be transported. An U.S. military engineering assessment team arrived in Islamabad October 13 and will assess the roads to these three sites on October 14 to determine where they are clear and capable of supporting a steady flow of supply conveys.

Air Drops

17. (C) The U.S. military currently has 51 pallets of food, water and blankets ready at Baghram air field to supply air drops from C-130s to earthquake survivors in areas relief teams cannot access by road. Military assessment teams in Blackhawks conducted surveys of possible drop zones on October 12, but the situation of these isolated survivors is so desperate that Pakistani military officials have requested that the U.S. conduct blind drops. Ambassador supports this position. U.S. C-130s air drop operations should begin on October 14.

Alternate Air Bases

18. (C) After some confusion as to the genesis of the concept of establishing a separate base of operations for Task Force Griffen (Note: As a result of a communication garble, the USG thought that the GOP came up with the idea of moving U.S. milair flights to a designated air field, while the GOP believed that the USG had formally requested a separate air field. End note.) U.S. military planners are now examining whether it makes sense to move some U.S. air assets to alternate bases, as operations at Qasim and Chaklala are reaching capacity.

Coordinating with Other Donors

19. (C) The UN Disaster Assistance Center (UNDAC) has now organized sector cluster groups, which are establishing websites to improve coordination. A UN Humanitarian Information Center team should be set up by October 14. Post representatives at the daily UNDAC coordination meeting came away concerned that there is no comprehensive picture of the distribution of relief supplies. ODRP will try to link the UN and NGOs into Pakistani military channels in order to improve tracking of the movement of humanitarian relief materials. Another emboff officer attending the October 13 UNDAC meeting reported a dramatic change in atmosphere from the previous day, with NGO representatives increasingly frustrated by a lack of coordination with the GOP. Relief agencies cannot get slots for flights to bring in relief cargoes. The GOP sent an unprepared MFA officer to the October 13 session, rather than the officials who had participated the day before. The MFA officer had no answers to the NGOs' questions, saying only that he would try to have responses by the following day. UN U/SYG Jan Egeland arrived October 13; in public statements calling for the international community to increase its assistance, he indirectly suggested that the Pakistani relief effort was failing.

Return to Muzzaferabad

10. (SBU) An emboff who had been in the devastated city of Muzzaferabad October 11 returned two days later to find a city reborn: people on the streets, tractors and other earth-moving equipment moving about, volunteer relief workers from Pakistan proper distributing food supplies from Sindh from the back of jingle trucks. Much of the credit for this transformation goes to the Punjabi police, who arrived late October 12 and immediately began to restore order amongst chaos.

11. (U) Kabul minimize considered.
CROCKER